A New Deal For The World
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This is a “How To” article on two themes: how to put an end to war and how to make a New Deal for prosperity and dignity for all worldwide.

War is a human institution; it does not arise inevitably from any natural cause. Although we humans have spent many thousands of years in competitive relationships with frequent violent confrontations, we now know how to distinguish between healthy competition and destructive conflict. And we know how to prevent dysfunctional violence. Furthermore, the “boys will be boys” attitude toward war is one game in animal-spirits mode that has become unacceptably dysfunctional with the development of modern military technology.

We know how to ensure economic security and social dignity for all. The vast inequalities of the present world system are not the only factors contributing to our proclivity to approach our diverse interests in a confrontational way, but reducing these inequalities would reduce mistrust and tension. Here again there is nothing preprogrammed into our genes that makes inequality or injustice inevitable. We are the masters of our fate, or at least we could be. However, existing economic and social structures and the history of adverse interactions do of course contribute to human insecurity. It should also be noted that there are various kinds of deliberate fraud and extreme selfishness that can undermine the implicit social compact. This is why citizen monitoring and governmental regulation are needed – that profit seeking by the few not destroy the lives and trust of many.

As economists and social scientists we give significant attention to the global structures that contribute to human welfare and to warfare, but, in my opinion, we do not give enough attention to process. We must seek cause and effect sequences that engender benign spirals for benign, humane results. As I wrote in an earlier issue of this publication, when Jean Monnet and Konrad Adenauer helped create the European Coal and Steel Community, they had a future EU-type institution in mind as well as the efficient use of scarce resources.

Thus, one very important how-to principle is to seek structures that make cooperative interaction easy, giving dignity to all participants. Learning by doing is the greatest multiplier; it amplifies, broadcasts, and teaches for an emerging, adaptive interactive global system.

Another principle is to look ahead, and widely. It is not enough to work for short-term compartmentalized goals. A global image of peace and prosperity for all should be held firmly in mind so that every step taken contributes in an optimum way to the global vision, giving the maximum importance possible to the needs of each nation and each segment of each society. This vision should be worldwide and multigenerational. The United Nations is an effective forum for harmonizing goals and visions because it encourages participatory global governance. It should not matter where one is born or what passport one holds if there is a common image of a worldwide global nation with congruent values and respect for all.

I would not wish to imply that these and similar principles can create a world of peace and plenty in a single step.
The primary objective is to create a path, which can become both a means for getting to a New Deal and the end. Building an integrated peaceful world community is a process more than it is a goal. We should recognize that a participatory process is itself a result. It is a very powerful strategy whereby people worldwide can learn and demonstrate what can be done to build power and wealth from the base upward. This empowerment is the proposed New Deal and its transforming effect on people is the result that will bring adequate prosperity to millions. Before colonialism, this perspective was common in many parts of the world, and it provides an understanding of process that has never been lost.

A related point, which is more economic, is to note that recent thinking in development economics gives renewed importance to improving agricultural production in less developed economies in order to produce real surpluses in the real economy. Such added value is an important basis for growth and for wellbeing even when it is small. In similar vein, I know a small business owner in upstate New York whose local bank manager has encouraged him to borrow in a way that would increase equity. It is good to know that added value in the real economy is appreciated—especially in an era of predatory management of over-leveraged loans in the paper economy. Thus, building additional value that serves people is an important principle for the proposed New Deal.

The first principle, which should be foremost of all, relates to every ambition and especially to peace and non-violence: it is to do no harm. It is important to not be diverted from a humane, participatory path by impatience. Each part of the future global community must be allowed to be built at its own pace. To do no harm is to honor the vision of others and to support the self-empowerment of each person and each nation, while at the same time demonstrating respect for the essential principles of universal human rights.

A New Deal for all can be negotiated quietly. People and nations will see what is needed for their economy and their environment, which is the common economy and common environment that everybody owns. The UN and the whole world community have many explicit vision and mission statements. What needs to be added is that everyone should play his or her role in a way that does not trample on the humane, pro-people, pro-planet vision of others. All the great world religions teach love and mutual respect, which is also the finding that emerges from the world of science, demonstrating that what works best is what serves the common human interest.

In the 21st Century it is no longer acceptable to exploit nature in a way that does not show a decent respect for future generations. With careful husbandry, the value of renewable resources can be expanded and shared using human creativity and sustainable means of production.

Everyone has power in proportion to the respect that he or she enjoys and anyone can use that power for creative or for destructive action. Terrorists, as well as community leaders, have power. If there is no honor or fear accorded to terrorist acts there will be very few. Communications technologies mean that everyone can know what others do and everyone can show support for or rejection of the policies and actions of nation states and non-state actors. Many civil society leaders are the non-state actors who are building the global-nation vision. They can have major influence on the shape and the tone of the global New Deal by demonstrating the policies and the action projects that contribute most to peace and wellbeing.

In the 21st Century everyone can be held accountable for his acts; thus it no longer should be possible for the
strong to override the interests of the weak. War crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide can be punished by the international law of the International Criminal Court. Everyone can be protected by the quiet vigilance of all. And as long as there are no alarmist responses that give power and dignity to criminal actions, it will be possible to minimize the importance of such acts and to apprehend the perpetrators. We are all demonstrators and monitors of human rights norms and law. The technology of modern weapons and the power of rapid communications mean that on the one hand it is not very difficult to generate fear and hyper-reactions to acts of terrorism, while on the other hand there are new capacities to stop anyone who would trample on the lives and peace of people worldwide. The new communications systems offer powerful tools to build solidarity and to prevent over-reaction to terrorism. It is in the hands of all citizens of all nations to determine how this growing power of worldwide communication will be used.

The proposed New Deal will be the deal the world community negotiates with itself to share a vision of a global nation living in peace, sustainable adequacy, and mutual respect to encourage one another and to protect a mutually supportive vision. The United Nations, which is developing new flexible competencies, can help greatly to create and guide this sort of complex adaptive system. At the same time, the concept can to some extent be self-managed; creating the New Deal will depend on self-management by individuals, civil society groups and states, as will the constant process of its implementation.

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